



**WORKFORCE
DEVELOPMENT BOARD**
MERCED COUNTY

**Merced County Workforce
Development Board
(MCWDB)
Local Plan**

**For the MCWDB and
Merced County Local Area
(2017- 2020)**

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PY 2017-2020 Strategic Four-Year Merced County Local Plan

A. Vision, Goals, and Strategy

i. Strategic Vision for Regional Economic Growth and Self-Sufficiency

The County of Merced established an agreement with the Workforce Investment Board of Merced County (MCWDB) and specifically established the vision to bring together key stakeholders in workforce development to address workforce challenges facing today's business and industry employers. The Chief Local Elected Official (CLEO) Agreement highlights that California has determined that "workforce development" is critical to the long-term economic health of the state; secondly, the driving force for the envisioned workforce development system should be local, employer driven partnerships focused upon continuous improvement of customer services; and thirdly, cost effective grant management, oversight and strategic planning for the local partnerships, is best provided through intergovernmental collaboration. MCWDB adopted the mission of "Responding to Business Needs by Providing Quality Resources." This mission drives the programs and services provided through the Employment Resource Centers in both Merced and Los Baños. Every effort is made to assure that Private Sector members of MCWDB represent the high demand occupations throughout Merced county. The remaining MCWDB members represent Labor, Education, Community Based Organizations, and local government. Together the MCWDB members address local and regional workforce challenges.

MCWDB acts as a community convener to bring together key stakeholders (e.g. business and industry employers, labor representatives, economic development professionals, and experts in workforce challenges) in order to evaluate and strategize in accordance with the most recent economic, business and employment environment. Not only does MCWDB do this locally, it also serves as a lead in the RPU (Regional Planning Unit, as defined by EDD) and are driving change on a regional level. MCWDB has developed the following vision statement: "Merced County's Workforce Development System will keep pace with new growth, the emerging economy, and the ever-changing needs of the employers by creating a better educated, highly skilled workforce, that's capable, prepared, and thoroughly knowledgeable." A majority of the MCWDB is comprised of business members that are representative of the regional and local business community. Along with business members are educators, politicians, workforce partners, and other service providers that are committed to shaping the local workforce to the needs and demands of the region. As such, the mission statement of MCWDB is: Responding to Business Needs by Providing Quality Resources.

In addition to the aspects mentioned above and in accordance with the vision outlined in the California Unified plan released by the State, the vision for MCWDB will:

- Create a mindset from job to career;
- Facilitate a defined system that can be replicated across the County,
- Help achieve accurate understanding of business and labor needs in our community;
- Springboard other pre-apprenticeship opportunities in the community;
- Provide an integrated system for both job seekers and employers to access colleges, WDB, economic development, human services, etc.;
- Support development of robust career pathways within the trades from K-12 as well as post-secondary development of labor for emerging and in-demand industries;
- Create strong partnerships with economic development; and,
- Create a nimble WDB able to successfully serve customers throughout the County.

Merced County is located in the San Joaquin Valley and has a population of approximately 268,455 people. Since 2016 Merced has had a median household income of \$43,066 and a poverty rate of 25.9 percent. Its population increases moderately each year as the region's lower cost of living

attracts individuals that currently reside in costlier areas of the state, while its prominent, agricultural industry consistently appeals to immigrant workers.¹ Since the recession, the county has maintained a steady growth in its total number of jobs; however, the region has an increasing shortage of qualified workers in growing key industries. As the population and industries continue to increase, education, job skills, and language needs are growing employment barriers that affect the health of the labor force.

The county has a labor force of approximately 118,300 individuals. Although the region is diverse in industries and skillsets, over 13 percent of the region's workforce exhibits educational attainment below state average. Although Healthcare, Construction, and Logistics are the fastest growing industries in Merced, it is likely that an immediate need exists for targeted job skills training as baby boomers near retirement from Agriculture, Education, and Government industries. Applied Development Economics, Inc. (ADE's) analysis and discussions with key employers, workforce organizations and training providers, has identified specific occupations as potential priorities for additional training efforts, including Medical Technicians, Electricians, and Maintenance Mechanics. It also cites specific skills needed by business, such as the ability to use computer-operated processing controls and instruments, supervisory and management skills, business skills, and related English competency. Based on trends in the demographic data provided by the US Census Bureau and ADE reports, the region should develop a strategy to mobilize underrepresented groups such as veterans, disabled workers, and high skilled minorities to fill immediate industry needs and prevent employment gaps.

Economic Outlook

Merced County is the 25th largest county in California and is well known for its Agriculture industry. Merced has over 2,900 businesses², with top employment industries including Agriculture, Education, Healthcare, and Manufacturing. Its labor force consists of approximately 118,300 individuals while it holds an unemployment rate of 9.9 percent. Residents have a median household income of \$43,066 while the region's poverty rate measures 25.9 percent. The State of California reports that although salary levels are below the state average, they are not expected to increase over the next five years. However, total employment is expected to grow by 1 percent each year.³ Furthermore trends have been identified across demographic groups that are likely to assist with increasing the capacity and strategy for workforce needs during industry shifts if further examined. For example, the Latino population is the largest in the region and has the highest poverty rates. According to US Census Bureau data, Asian citizens account for 8 percent of Merced, yet have the highest average salary in the region, earning almost 11 times as much as other members of the workforce, within the same field.

Based on the region's growth and workforce projections, it is likely that the following recommendations for continuous improvement will assist the improvement the state of the labor force and increase self-sufficiency of the county.

- Increase collaboration with system stakeholders: Greater collaboration with system stakeholders in the Agriculture, Education, and Government industries, particularly economic and workforce development. Merced should engage industry specific regional discussions of current and emerging skill requirements. Merced County business support agencies and economic development organizations all suggest that key sectors will benefit as the result of interventions by the workforce and education system.

¹ The Long Way Home: Regional Commuting Patterns In & Out of San Joaquin County (Publication No. Vol 8 No 1). (2015). Retrieved January 6, 2017, from Erberhardt School of Business Center for Business & Policy Research website: <http://www.pacific.edu/Documents/school-business/BFC/Analyst-Spotlight%20Archive/2015%20RA/2015%20Commuting%20RA.pdf>

² Merced County, CA. (n.d.). Retrieved January 06, 2017, from <https://datausa.io/profile/geo/merced-county-ca/#industries>
Based on American Community Survey (ACS) 1 year and 5 year estimates and US Census Bureau data

³ Schniepp, M. (2015). California County-Level Economic Forecast 2015-2040 (Rep.). Retrieved January 6, 2017, from The California Economic Forecast website: <http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/tpp/offices/eab/docs/Full%20Report%202015.pdf>

- Leverage partnerships to increase educational attainment within the workforce: Educational attainment affects employment status. Latinos in Merced account for over 58 percent of the population with an expected growth of approximately 690 people per year.⁴ However, the Latino population demonstrate the largest trends of the lowest education attainment, and highest poverty rates within the region. Persons with no high school diploma exhibit rates of unemployment that more than double unemployment levels for persons with a college degree, or 15.8 percent versus 6.1 percent. Of the persons with a college degree, almost 68 percent work full-time, resulting in a full-time employment rate that is 18 percentage points greater than the rate for persons without a high school diploma. Nearly 1,400 annual openings are for jobs that do require a certificate in a specialized area of training. The largest occupational groups in this category include medical assistants (348 annual openings) and licensed practical and vocational nurses (308 openings per year).
- Identify additional trends in workforce needs: According to California's Employment Development Department, Merced County has six providers to assist with job training.⁵ Collecting observations from workforce assets and additional training centers regarding educational attainment, job skills and other employment barriers would assist in industry specific service connection. For example, nineteen percent of workers throughout the region indicated a struggle with language. Businesses within the region have requested specific skills such as the ability to use computer-operated processing controls and instruments, supervisory and management skills, business skills, and related English competency. It is likely that there is an increasing need of diversity in skills training, programming and resources. Providing language services will assist the largest workforce population in increasing their prospects for success in the career path.
- Examine the needs of high skilled, unemployed workforce: The largest ethnic group within the region are Latinos accounting for over 58 percent of Merced County's population, while individuals identifying as White account for 28.9 percent. Over 12 percent of the population has typically been categorized together as "Other" during studies. However, it is important to note that the less predominant ethnic and racial groups within this region, have a higher rate of educational attainment beyond a high school diploma compared to the majority of the region's population. Further evaluation is needed to improve job placement among residents in this category. In addition, needs should be assessed within underrepresented groups such as unemployed veterans and disabled individuals with high educational attainment levels. For example, ADE reported that veterans demonstrated education levels higher than high school diplomas and an unemployment rate of 8.7 percent. It is likely that the veteran population has a higher level of healthcare and technical skillsets based on workforce experience that is not accounted for in educational surveys. It is highly likely that industry skillsets that are in higher demand for Healthcare, Construction and Logistics, could be met through this group.

Skill Requirements for a Diverse Region

The in-depth stakeholder engagement process, which included both business representatives and individuals from organizations that serve businesses, pinpointed several key skill areas that companies require of their employees and job candidates. These include:

- Foundational skills: Basic literacy and numeracy skills are required in virtually every type of work. Education partners equate the typical minimum requirements of businesses for language and math skills to 8th grade proficiency.

⁴ Schniepp, M. (2015). California County-Level Economic Forecast 2015-2040 (Rep.). Retrieved January 6, 2017, from The California Economic Forecast website: <http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/tpp/offices/eab/docs/Full%20Report%202015.pdf>

⁵ State of California Employment Development Department. (n.d.). Retrieved January 6, 2017, from <http://www.labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov/cgi/databrowsing/localAreaProfileQSMOREResult.asp?menuChoice=localAreaPro&criteria=trainingproviders&categoryType=General&geogArea=0604000047&more=More>
Database search: Training Providers in Area in Merced County

- Core competency skills: Repeatedly, businesses and those who provide training for their workers expressed that digital literacy is now a core competency. While the ways that technology manifests within a company and in relation to specific jobs are countless, a baseline understanding of computer/microprocessor operations is now essential for virtually all work. Many stakeholders, including businesses themselves, expressed similar thoughts about “customer service” skills, recognizing that strong customer relations, be them external or internal, affect productivity and profitability.
- Soft skills (work readiness and work maturity skills): Punctuality, team work, customer responsiveness, critical thinking, and accepting supervision are among a long list of workplace behaviors, attitudes and knowledge that businesses require. Many businesses, for which specific licensure/certification is not a prerequisite, indicate that these “skills” alone can advance a job applicant to the hiring phase and suggest that no candidate be referred without workforce system representatives first verifying that he or she demonstrates competency in these areas.
- Job skills (hard skills): As indicated various times throughout this Plan, each target industry has described skills needed for workers in a wide range of occupations.

ii. Core Programs and Alignment of Resources

Several meetings have taken place over the last few months that have brought core and required partners to the table to actively engage in collaborative planning around the workforce system in Merced County. The most recent took place on December 5, 2016, from 2:00-4:00 (Flyer, notes and sign-in sheet attached as Attachment 2), which consisted of a forum held to help with assistance on the regional/local plan. The following were in attendance:

- EDD
- Merced County Office of Education (“MCOE”)
- UC Merced
- Workforce Development Board of Merced County
- Merced College
- Human Services Agency (TANF)
- Merced High School District
- Deputy Sector Navigator for Health Care for the Community Colleges
- Adult Education Block Grant Consortium Representative
- Private Industry
- Deputy Sector Navigator for Agriculture for the Community Colleges

MCWDB has a goal to convene the core and local partners on a quarterly basis to continue conversations regarding the strategies to carrying out the core programs of the workforce system. Additional topics covered will include supportive services, common customer service efficiencies, collaborative business engagement activities, labor market responses, career pathway development and implementation among others. These quarterly meetings will allow for the mandated partners to continuously monitor and improve the workforce system in a manner that can respond quickly to economic and employer shifts in the region. In addition to the quarterly meetings, MCWDB convenes bi-weekly meetings with members of the education field to ensure relevance of sector strategies and career pathways. MCWDB participates in an annual legislative day to discuss issues on community growth and advancement of the workforce system activities. Finally, MCWDB regularly coordinates conversations with labor, education and private industry representatives to discuss apprenticeships, pre-apprenticeships, OJTs, and other earn and learn models that will support the development of qualified workers to meet the needs of local employers.

B. Local Program Alignment to Implement State Plan Policy Strategies

i. Description of the Local Workforce Development System

The local workforce development system includes Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Out of School Youth programs. Two comprehensive AJCC's serve the area. One is in Merced and the other is located in Los Baños and serves the Westside communities of the workforce development area. Basic career services, intensive career services, business engagement services and training services can be accessed through the AJCCs. Other programs administered through the system include Wagner-Peyser (EDD is collocated at Los Baños AJCC and DWI is relocating to collocate with EDD at the Merced AJCC), TANF (through the Merced County Human Services Agency), Job Corps (collocated at both AJCC's), Migrant and Seasonal Farm Workers (CVOC is collocated with Merced AJCC), California Department of Rehabilitation (collocated at Merced AJCC and negotiations in progress to establish a presence in Los Baños), Merced County Community Action Agency (has a presence at the Merced AJCC), and Disability Employment services (through an initiative run by the Merced County Department of Workforce Investment). Information and referral to others services is also available through the system.

ii. Local Board Support of Seven Policy Strategies

MCWDB's strategic direction, outlined in this local plan, will align and support the execution of the seven policies outlined in the State Plan. This involves MCWDB's ability to help facilitate core programs and other workforce development programs to support the following strategies emphasized in the State Plan:

Policy 1: Sector Strategies - The RPU partners have selected the following sectors as priorities under the Regional Workforce Development Plan: advanced manufacturing; construction (including public infrastructure); energy (including green energy); healthcare; transportation and logistics; and value-added agriculture. The decision to target these sectors is based principally on the following factors:

- Each is showing substantial growth and/or post-recession resurgence in the Valley;
- To varying extents, the industries are being transformed by technology, requiring innovative strategies and approaches for training new workers and the current workforce;
- Engagement with businesses, business supporting agencies and economic development organizations all suggest that these sectors will benefit as the result of interventions by the workforce and education system.
- They were selected as targets through the extensive research and planning that culminated in the 2012 San Joaquin Valley Regional Industry Cluster Analysis and Action Plan. According to the Cluster Action Plan (which was reinforced in ADE's 2016 economic and workforce analysis), emerging opportunities for these "comparative advantage" industry clusters are the foundation for innovation, competitiveness, and future well-being in the region. They support improved health, sustainability, energy self-sufficiency, and shared prosperity.

MCWDB has adopted the above sector strategies, in addition to water technology, for its local region as each of them have significant relevance in either employment numbers and/or growth projections for Merced County.

- **Advanced Manufacturing:** From a historical perspective, locally, MCWDB has had a broad range of manufacturing, not simply advanced manufacturing. This has included machinists, maintenance mechanics, welders, operators, and warehouseman to name a few. Manufacturing in Merced is diverse, it cannot be categorically defined as "advanced" or "basic" but is rather simply manufacturing.
- **Construction (Public Infrastructure, Private):** MCWDB is heavily involved in bringing pre-apprenticeship training to Merced County in cooperation with the Laborers International Union of North America and also other trade unions. This is in direct response to the UC Merced 2020 Development Project, revitalization of downtown Merced, Merced-Atwater Expressway, Campus Parkway, and private growth related to these major projects.

- **Energy (Green Energy):** Merced County is home to two solar farms on the westside of the county, and is in the process of developing another large solar farm that is expected to produce several hundred jobs.
- **Healthcare:** Due to an aging population healthcare needs are expected to increase exponentially over the next decade. MCWDB has an active relationship with Merced College and actively trains/supports RNs, LVNs, MAs, CNAs, and Radiology Technicians. In addition, in 2016 utilizing the Accelerator 2.0 Grant MCWDB worked with UC Davis Betty Moore School of Nursing, the Livingston Health Center, and Camarena Health to develop a new career pathway for medical assistants training them as health coaches.
- **Transportation and Logistics:** MCWDB actively trains truck drivers, fork lift drivers and others necessary to move products from one region to another in order to address a critical skill gap in the region.
- **Agriculture:** Merced County has a wide variety of agriculture from farm workers/migrant workers to agricultural manufacturing. MCWDB works to help provide farm workers/migrant workers with the necessary skills and training to help them develop their current job into a career. This includes help with ESL, high school equivalency/GED, and other upskilling activities. MCWDB works closely with CVOC and the Merced Adult school to serve 166 and 167 participants.
- **Water Technology:** Merced County has been in a severe drought for the last seven years. The drought has been so severe that FEMA has declared Merced County a disaster relief area and is actively distributing assistance. This has spurred Merced County to develop alternative and innovative methods of water conservation and technology to support its agriculturally driven economy. Waste water treatment and reclamation is one of the avenues that Merced County has utilized to address this need. MCWDB has supported training for participants in these areas.

MCWDB's Individual Training Account Policy (ITA) is to train in the identified in-demand sectors in local and regional labor markets. Contracted training will continue to be used to obtain training in sectors that are not currently available or to increase the availability of training slots.

Policy 2: Career Pathways - MCWDB has been working in a strong partnership with Merced College to design and implement high quality training for individuals and industry partners in order to fill needed quality job skill gaps. The MCWDB focus is to help underprepared individuals become prepared to enter the workplace, and to seek qualifications and credentials that are stackable, as well as desirable by employers. Career pathways in pre-apprenticeship multi-craft construction, green energy, transportation, and healthcare have been established and are a large focus and MCWDB will continue to increase training in those areas. MCWDB has also been working on a regional level concurrently with the RPU to maximize training dollars and effect for participants and partners. Additionally, MCWDB, is working with all partners, educators, employers to identify the best way to work with all parties to streamline the process in creating effective career pathways with multiple on and off ramps to accommodate the needs of employers and skills of local workforce.

Policy 3: Earn and Learn - MCWDB utilizes On-the-Job Training (OJT) as an opportunity for individuals to earn while they learn new skills in sectors in demand. The OJT activity takes into consideration the various learning styles of job seekers who may prefer "hands on" learning or work based learning. The OJT allows individuals who have classroom skills to apply those skills in the real world of work. Pre-Apprenticeship and Apprenticeship programs have been established locally in the construction industry, allowing individuals to explore construction, energy, and healthcare trades. Additional earn and learn opportunities are provided by the youth services contractor which enrolls participants in paid internships and paid work experience county wide in the in-demand, high growth sectors identified above. MCWDB has a robust paid internship and unpaid work experience program that is utilized to provide training to both youth and adults. MCWDB has also contracted to provide

services under the Expanded Subsidized Employment (ESE) program (earn and learn) for targeted populations on behalf of the local TANF partner.

Policy 4: Regional Organization - The Central California Workforce Collaborative has organized regionally since the early days of the Workforce Investment Act. Regional communities meet to discuss best practices and to develop early tracking systems in order to identify numbers of visitors to the one-stop career centers. The Central California Workforce applies for grants that would benefit partners regionally. The CCWC has contracted entities to provide information both regionally and regarding characteristics of the workforce and identifying in demand sectors. The CCWC includes eight workforce development boards covering ten counties including:

- | | |
|---------------|----------|
| • San Joaquin | • Kings |
| • Stanislaus | • Tulare |
| • Merced | • Kern |
| • Madera | • Inyo |
| • Fresno | • Mono |

The Mother Lode region was a part of the CCWC prior to the formalization of the RPU's in 2016. While not a formal partner any longer, Mother Lode still is actively participating in regional meeting and planning with the CCWC.

The goals of the regional collaborative is to:

- Capacity to receive on-going input from industry on its changing needs and support from business in translating workplace skill needs into training content.
- Shortening the turn-around time from when business “sounds the alarm” to the start date of training in new and updated courses.
- Consistency of content from institution to institution and from area to area so that regional businesses can gain confidence that credentials resulting from training reflect agreed upon content.
- Greater collaboration with system stakeholders, particularly economic and workforce development, in the process of engaging industry in regional discussions of current and emerging skill requirements.
- Development of more on-ramps for individuals with barriers to employment to enter training that enables subsequent transition to career pathway programs eventually leading to middle-skill and other self-sustainability employment.

Policy 5: Supportive Service Provision - The supportive service that is predominant in serving customers in the MCWDB area has been transportation. Most of the WIOA ETPL approved trainings that are not semester based are in Stanislaus County. Individuals are required to have reliable transportation to get to the training sites as well as money to pay for the gas and maintain their vehicle. The bus system operates twice daily from the Los Baños, Dos Palos area to Merced with a return bus in the afternoon and early evening. Childcare, work and/or appropriate clothing for training as well as uniforms, tools and costs of testing in order to obtain certification or licensure are all coordinated with various partners in order to prevent duplication. Community resources are utilized when the referral is appropriate to the needs of the customer such as emergency food, housing, and transportation.

As the workforce system collaborations continue to evolve MCWDB will ensure that all local resources available for supportive services are identified and made known to all AJCC staff in an effort to maximize the limited resources available in the region. MCWDB strives to provide the greatest number of supportive services possible to participants while preventing duplication of services with our partners through collaboration.

Policy 6: Building Cross-System Data Capacity - Currently, within Merced County the ability to build cross-system data capacity is limited. Almost every partner utilizes a different format of tracking, or the underlying software itself is different. However, MCWDB and its partners have agreed to utilize a common referral form which was attached to the Phase I MOU. To the extent possible data and best practices are shared across the system. As the system continues to improve and expand, MCWDB will not only lead the charge in developing a common referral form, but also explore a common assessment that all partners can use in identifying the barriers/needs and support an AJCC customer may need.

Policy 7: Integrated Services and Braided Resources - Typical examples of braiding resources include when CalWORKs customers obtain training through WIOA. Transportation and childcare assistance can be provided through CalWORKs while the training the customer receives may be an Individual Training Account or contracted training opportunity. WIOA has braided resources for individuals who are also customers of Department of Rehabilitation. In these situations, training is funded by WIOA and transportation and tutorial services for customers are funded by DOR.

MCWDB has also coordinated with surrounding counties as well as local education entities and other county departments to better serve customer needs. This includes coordinating with Merced College to co-enroll eligible individuals to provide supportive services for students, such as testing and certification fees for RNs, LVNs, Radiological Technicians and others in the healthcare fields. After training, the two organizations work together to obtain OJTs or unsubsidized employment for students. MCWDB will continue to explore local and regional opportunities for maximizing resources to support our customers.

C. Specified Services and Service Delivery Strategies

i. Core Programs and Access to Employment, Training, Education, and Supportive Services

MCWDB will utilize an integrated service delivery (ISD) model to facilitate increased access to the full spectrum of workforce system services (including employment, training, education, and supportive services) for all jobseekers, including those experiencing barriers to employment. Under this model, the focus of first engagement will be to identify and understand the needs of each customer and direct them to the appropriate staff person or program to meet those needs. Developing the common referral and assessment form will allow staff to more effectively identify the program(s) best suited to meet the needs of the AJCC customers. This will allow for seamless service delivery from the customer's perspective across Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth, Wagner-Peyser, Vocational Rehabilitation, and any other co-located AJCC programs. Populations with barriers to employment will still have dedicated services available to meet their specific needs. Using this model and the strategies set forth in this Local Plan, MCWDB will use the structure outlined below to expand access to services, especially for those with barriers to employment.

MCWDB plans on increasing the number of individuals exposed to and served by the AJCC and its programs including but not limited to Dislocated Workers, Adults and Youth Programs, Unemployment Insurance, Wagner-Peyser, and Vocational Rehabilitation. These partners work together to recruit individuals for each of the programs. AJCC staff presents information at the CalWORKs Orientation on training and employment opportunities available through the AJCC.

- Long-term unemployed, displaced homemakers, low-income adults and youth, single parents, the homeless, and individuals with limited or no work experience are reached through this effort and other outreach strategies.
- AJCC staff make significant efforts to encourage individuals with disabilities to consider themselves "otherwise able" so that they can look positively at the training and employment opportunities. Through the Disability Employment Initiative Grant MCWDB is providing career and technological services to many with disabilities in our community.

- AJCC staff performs outreach to high schools, TANF participants including youth programs, Merced College orientations, job fairs, as well as informational fairs for youth and veterans. MCWDB is a participant in the countywide high school youth healthcare forum, county youth career day, headstart parent groups outreach and residents of low income housing complexes.
- AJCC staff performs presentations for re-entry populations and actively provides services as allowed under state and federal guidelines.
- Migrant and seasonal farm workers and individuals with limited English Speaking abilities utilize our AJCC resources including the Rosetta Stone program to assist them in their efforts to learn English.

Staff in both of our centers speak fluent Spanish. Social media has been a great equalizer in the efforts to recruit individuals for pre-apprenticeship programs, job fairs and training opportunities. MCWDB posts jobs, training opportunities, job fairs and employer interviews on Facebook. MCWDB contracts with the adult school to provide basic education for our participants to get needed instruction to obtain their GED or help with ESL and VESL. This is provided on site at the Los Banos center and through referrals to the Adult School in Merced.

In addition, Merced County has a robust Disability Employment Initiative (DEI), working with more than twenty different entities in the community to serve DEI participants. Quarterly meetings are held with partners on how to better coordinate services and provide wrap around services in some cases. Some of the partners include:

- Merced County Mental Health
- California Department of Rehabilitation
- Center of Vision Enhancement (COVE)
- Deaf and Hard of Hearing Service Center, Inc.

MCWDB issues a youth directory for all services available to youth countywide to inform youth of the services that are available. This directory is issued in both electronic and hardcopy, with interpreters available at the AJCC to explain services if needed.

The AJCC is also in the process of developing a directory of services available throughout the county to people with disabilities. As of now, MCWDB plans to make this available to the public and agencies across various mediums to improve its outreach.

ii. Career Pathways Development and Co-Enrollment in Core Programs

The following section describes multiple strategies MCWDB utilizes to facilitate the development of career pathways and co-enrollment in core programs.

Work on Sector Strategies, Career Pathways, Regional Partnerships, Earn and Learn Models, Supportive Services, Creating Cross-System Data Capacity, Integrated Service Delivery

- a. Meetings are conducted on a bi-weekly basis with members of education, specifically from Merced College on the advancement of sector strategies, career pathways, cooperative development of training modules for participants, identifying the training needs of employers in the county, and we jointly pursue grant opportunities to further training opportunities and leverage funding. MCWDB has worked closely with Merced College for many years to develop healthcare related training.
- b. Merced WDB participates in Legislative Day locally on a yearly basis meeting with state and federal lobbyists to bring forward issues facing our community's growth and the advancement of Sector Strategies, Career Pathways, Regional Partnerships, Earn and Learn Models, Supportive Services, Creating Cross-System Data Capacity, Integrated Service Delivery.
- c. At the state level, MCWDB participates in the annual day at the capital, meeting with California legislators to keep them informed of the needs and challenges facing Merced County populations.

- d. Merced WDB attends the National Association of Workforce Boards in Washington, D.C. annually to keep informed of new and innovative ways to provide services to the community. During these annual trips the MCWDB meets with legislators to inform them of the work being done in the Central Valley and bring forth issues in our community.
- e. MCWDB is involved in a minimum of six annual local town hall forums around the county put on by county and city elected officials. MCWDB is an active participant and provides information on the services that the AJCCs provide.
- f. Annually MCWDB presents a report of the activities and services provided by the AJCCs over the last year. This presentation is agenzized and made before the Board of Supervisors (CEO) in a public forum at one of the regularly scheduled meetings.
- g. Merced WDB coordinates with local unionized labor, education and private industry to introduce needed training to Merced to fill local/regional skill gaps. Merced WDB has introduced, and continues to develop the following:
 - Apprenticeships
 - Pre-Apprenticeships
 - OJTs
 - Paid internships for Youth are provided through MCOE, the contracted youth services provider.
 - Paid Work Experience opportunities through the Youth and ESE programs.

Building career pathways with a focus on demand-driven skills attainment and enabling upward mobility for all Californians is a key theme of California's Unified Plan under WIOA. As such, the MCWDB will continue its work to develop and promote these opportunities throughout Merced County.

iii. Post-Secondary Credentials and Industry-Recognized Certifications

The goal of the California State Plan is to create one million "middle-skill" industry-valued and recognized post-secondary credentials between 2017 and 2027.⁶ MCWDB has recently revised its ITA policy to facilitate individuals obtaining stackable credentials. Rather than a simple certificate of completion, a certification by an industry recognized entity is sought by MCWDB as a portable credential for the customer. Examples include: RETA Certification, Welding Certification, or Microsoft Office User Certification. MCWDB is also providing testing opportunities to gain certifications during and after training. The Health and Medical field offers opportunities for stackable credentials. Licensing examples include: Certified Nursing Assistant, Licensed Vocational Nurse, and Registered Nurse. For example, The Individual Training Account Policy adopted by MCWDB provides an opportunity for an individual to go to more than one training or certification program as a stackable credential. The certifications can be utilized with any employer as they are "industry standard" credentials. MCWDB has made it a priority to communicate more with partners and businesses to provide quality jobs that employers need, even if it results in creating all new programs with industry recognized certificates that may not be currently supplied through traditional educational avenues.

Internally MCWDB is providing pre-apprenticeship construction training that prepares participants to apply for multi trade craft positions and a career in the construction industry. MCWDB will supply this training in Merced County in partnership with the Merced Community College and LiUNA for the first time in 2017. MCWDB coordinates with local unionized labor, education and private industry to introduce needed training to Merced to fill local/regional skill gaps. MCWDB has introduced, and continues to develop the following programs: Apprenticeships; Pre-Apprenticeships; and OJTs.

⁶ Employment Development Department. (2016). *Regional and Local Planning guidance for PY 2017-2020*. Retrieved from: http://www.edd.ca.gov/jobs_and_training/pubs/wsd16-07.pdf

iv. Employer Engagement in Workforce Development Programs

MCWDB and its Merced County partners will continue to engage employers in the development of curriculum for both technical and soft skills that local businesses identify as essential to the applicant's success in obtaining and maintaining employment. The mission of Merced County Business Representatives is to develop relationships with employers and identify their needs for the labor force. Currently, some businesses are finding the skilled workers they need from existing training programs while others are hiring workers from other businesses to fulfill open positions. It is the goal of MCWDB to promote training programs which local employers can successfully hire from. With that in mind, MCWDB is working with local manufacturers and the California State Apprenticeship Board to develop an apprenticeship program locally for machinists. This program is being developed as a result of local machinist businesses struggling to obtain qualified workers in the current pool of available machinists, a problem that is statewide.

v. Meeting the Needs of Local Business

MCWDB has made significant efforts to change the conversation with employers from one that is transaction oriented – how many openings do you have? – to one that is more strategic in nature. That conversation begins by our Business Service Representatives listening to the employer and fully understanding what their needs are now and into the future. This understanding then allows the workforce system to be more effective in how we interact with staff, clients, partners, educators, and employers knowing that we are acting in the best interest of them. Understanding the needs of employers is to know who to recruit for their culture, what educational and hard skills will make participants successful at their organization, and understand where they are headed to work with our partners to ensure we have the programs to support the future needs of the employers.

On a day to day basis MCWDB utilizes the single point of contact for recruiting efforts to ensure that a business request is directed to the appropriate party. If there is an on-the-job training requested by a business, the Business Services Representative can coordinate the assessment, eligibility, contract negotiations, and follow-up with the employer to ensure the placement is working for the business. Supportive services may require coordination with case managers of different program partners.

Additionally, the Business Services Division of MCWDB participates in various Chambers of Commerce activities: chamber mixers, and business meetings and presentations updating the community on the economic status of the County, which not only builds relationships with local and regional businesses, but give the Business Service Representative an insight into what types of services are of value to the business community.

During the past year, four job fairs were held in the Merced County workforce area. These job fairs were in Atwater, Merced, Planada and Los Baños. Present at these job fairs are 16 to 32 businesses representing a diverse cross section of employers across the county. MCWDB conducts these events as active hiring opportunities, to pair participants with employers. By hosting job fairs at sites across the workforce area a broader selection of applicants is available and a greater level of accessibility for job seekers to employers is obtained county wide. Our goal over the next couple of years is to continue hosting at least four job fairs annually, and create sector driven job fairs as well. In other words, have all healthcare employers present at one job fair and agriculture companies present at another. MCWDB also participates in many job and informational fairs hosted by other partners to provide information on our services to the community. MCWDB is active in as many job and informational fairs as possible to increase outreach and solidify relationships with business and the public.

The foregoing may provide a description of the way Local Boards and their partners will implement initiatives such as incumbent worker training programs, on-the-job training programs, customized

training programs, industry and sector strategies, career pathways initiatives, utilization of effective business intermediaries, and other business services and strategies designed to meet the needs of regional employers. These initiatives should support the strategy the Local Board will use to work with entities carrying out core programs to expand access to employment, training, education, and supportive services for eligible individuals, particularly eligible individuals with barriers to employment.

vi. Coordination between Workforce Development with Economic Development

MCWDB also recognizes that one of the primary purposes of WIOA is to better align the workforce system with economic development to create a collective response to labor market challenges at the local level. MCWDB aims to develop stronger ties between elected officials, economic development, and workforce development partners to present a more unified approach to workforce and economic development activities in the region, resulting in a unified regional economic strategy. In an effort to strengthen the relationship between economic and workforce development, MCWDB will not only regularly share information about the labor market and labor force but what program and services are available and being developed, tax incentives, or local area planning requirements are available to employers. Becoming a well-rounded spokesperson in these areas will increase the exposure and perception of the workforce system as a true partner to economic development. MCWDB will convene meetings with economic development partners as a way to understand what the future holds for the local economy and a way to streamline the services available to local employers.

vii. Strengthen Linkages with Unemployment Insurance Programs

Recipients of Unemployment Insurance (UI) benefits are encouraged to get involved in labor market research, attend the orientation about AJCC services, take advantage of the assessments to provide insight into areas of strength, and attend workshops on completing applications, interviewing, resumes, cover letters, and employer expectations when hired. If individuals have not earned their high school diploma or GED, referrals to MCWDB's Plato Lab in Los Baños with a certified instructor from Merced Adult School, or referral to Merced Adult School in Merced are available to assist them in accomplishing their goals. MCWDB also provides step by step instructions on how to e-mail EDD to request interest in California Training Benefits to be noted.

In the local service area, MCWDB works closely with Employment Development Department (EDD) partners including Wagner-Peyser, Unemployment Insurance, and the Veterans Employment Program. Wagner-Peyser delivers services through the AJCC system, and includes information sharing on Unemployment Insurance (UI).

Wagner-Peyser funded staff are co-located in some AJCC offices in Merced County. All sites utilize the Labor Exchange System and provide access to CalJOBS for participant job search and resume posting. The AJCCs are partners with EDD in providing information to participants regarding UI eligibility and the claims filing process. Any individual may file a UI claim either by phone or online. UI applicants have access to a dedicated telephone line and the internet in the resource room so that the claims process and required follow-up may be completed. The dedicated phone line provides instant access to the UI Call Center and serves to better serve customers, reducing wait time and providing individual service.

It is MCWDB's goal to ensure that all jobseekers are connected with the services which they are eligible such as employment, training, and education available through the AJCC, as well as access to information on Unemployment insurance. UI recipients are encouraged to enroll in the AJCC so that they may benefit from re-employment programs and services available to them including job search orientation and workshops, development of an individual work search and employment plan, access to LMI, education and training services, individual counseling, and case management. One way to increase the collaboration between UI and the other AJCC programs would be to profile the UI

customers and coordinate skill-based or experience based interactions with relevant employers and job seekers. Naturally this creates a network of individuals that have worked in the same industry or have the same skills, but it also connects them directly to an employer looking to fill a need. The AJCCs in the area work to integrate services such as Job Services, Older Workers, Vocational Education, Social Services, Vocational Rehabilitation, Business Development, and Youth services through partnerships with local, state, and national partners. Multilingual staff are available to assist second language speakers in filing for UI benefits and meeting their employment needs. During the MOU Phase II development and negotiation process, the partnership between MCWDB and Wagner-Peyser and UI programs will further be solidified and strengthened.

D. America's Job Centers of CaliforniaSM (AJCC)

i. Continuous Improvement of Eligible Service Providers

MCWDB provides comprehensive oversight and guidance to assist system providers with accomplishing Local Area performance goals and encourage continuous improvement in service delivery. At the federal level, the U.S. Departments of Education and Labor and other related federal agencies provide the tools and technical assistance with which WDBs can work toward continuous improvement in services to youth and adults with barriers to employment across the entire workforce development system. Performance measures, in particular, drive continuous improvement efforts at the local level. As noted in WIOA, AJCCs are evaluated by their ability to accomplish performance goals, integrate services, and meet local employer and jobseeker needs, while continuously improving their efforts to do so over time. WIOA serves as a catalyst for innovation to improve system performance, as local areas are provided with flexibility to continuously improve their systems. To embrace this goal, MCWDB is constantly challenging itself to exceed performance and utilize innovation, technology, and communication strategies to better connect jobseekers and employers in the broader workforce and economic development system of Merced County.

In addition to monitoring evaluations released biannually by the Bureau of Private Post-Secondary Schools, MCWDB ensures providers are recognized by the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) or the Bureau of Proprietary School Supervision list prior to enrollment. Internally, the Department has a schedule of contacts with students in training, which rotates across case managers on monthly basis. During these visits case managers visit training sites to assess trainee satisfaction, meet individually with trainees, meet instructors, and facilitate trainee evaluation form completion.

ii. Service Delivery in Remote Areas through Use of Technology

MCWDB will utilize several strategies to facilitate access to service provided through the AJCC delivery system throughout Merced County, including in remote areas. Strategies include:

- Comprehensive centers located at opposite sides of the county in order provide access to the highest number of possible participants.
- Regional coordination of services to help a broad spectrum of participants.
- Meetings between Merced WDB and rural CBOs
- Job Fairs in remote areas.
- Attendance at community forums in rural areas to provide information on services provided.
- Identify and implement access points at local community partners, such as libraries to increase the access to services.
- Develop and implement a plan to incorporate technology into the delivery of services increasing the access to service beyond the two comprehensive centers.

iii. Compliance with Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12101 et seq.)

Merced County requires all buildings occupied by county agencies to be ADA compliant. Should a currently occupied building not be ADA compliant, then the lease may not renew on said building after

termination. In March 2017 Merced WDB is relocating to be co-located with EDD at 1205 W 18th St, Merced, CA 95340. The new building is certified as being ADA compliant.

Presently, AJCCs within Merced County have been regularly monitored by the State of California to ensure compliance with EEO requirements. These assessments specifically address the availability of services for individuals with disabilities. MCWDB has a Disability Employment Initiative Grant and staff have received training from DOR, Eric Glunt, the Department of Mental Health, among others, and are involved in quarterly statewide meetings on the DEI to provide trainings and best practices.

Outside of formalized guidance, MCWDB is making strides to improve and expand services to individuals with disabilities and other special populations. AJCC partners agree to not discriminate, harass or allow harassment against any person because of age, race, culture, religious or political affiliation, gender, national origin, ancestry, physical or mental disability, medical condition, veteran status, marital status, or sexual orientation. Therefore, all partners in the AJCC system agree to comply with section 188 of the American with Disabilities Act of 1990 and receive training on the specifics of the act related to the provision of services and accessibility. Given new WIOA requirements, AJCC partners agree to plan towards innovative ways to increase customer access through center locations, referrals, and/or use of modern technology. Creative access planning will include exploration of co-location, direct linkages, cross-training, and referrals as outlined in a forthcoming planning guide. The following section details specific strategies utilized to serve individuals with disabilities.

Engagement of Employers for Individuals with Disabilities

To engage employers for individuals with disabilities, MCWDB ensures that staff participate on a Disability Task Force to facilitate rapport with Disability advocates and stakeholders and position MCWDB for better partnership; develops opportunities to collaborate with the Adult Schools as they transition adults with disabilities from training and education courses to employment; involves a Department of Rehabilitation (DOR) representative on the WDB; and guarantees DOR's involvement in the Partner MOU process for services coordination.

MCWDB recognizes opportunities to continue the development of strategic partnerships and a shared vision for the commitment to individuals with disabilities. MCWDB will leverage the existing contractor, Lisa Jordan of Human Solutions, LLC, to work with Business Service Representatives and employers around Merced County concerning engaging individuals with disabilities. The Department of Rehabilitation, Mental Health and others have provided staff training to increase knowledge on legal issues to become more informed and to better serve individuals with disabilities. MCWDB continues to contracts with consultants to provide educational workshops to familiarize employers with the benefits of hiring individuals with disabilities and clarify any questions they may have regarding risks or liabilities. MCWDB will implement a pilot program designed to place individuals with disabilities in employment while providing support to employers. This will aim to alleviate concerns with hiring individuals with disabilities and position key employers as leaders for accessibility in the business community.

Engagement of Relevant Stakeholders

MCWDB has identified multiple stakeholders to be engaged in these efforts, including:

- The Merced County Department of Mental Health;
- The Department of Rehabilitation;
- Local Business; and,
- All other interested or affected stakeholders.

iv. Roles and Resource Contributions of the AJCC partners

MCWDB currently utilizes colocated partnerships both on site at the two AJCCs and at partner sites throughout Merced County. A list of partners and their roles can be found below:

- CVOC is a colocated partner that provides onsite services to the migrant/farm worker population.
- Job Corps is a colocated partner that provides recruitment and orientations for their programs to participants.
- EDD is a colocated partner that provides UI and Wagner-Peyser services to participants.
- California Department of Rehabilitation is onsite to provide assistance to participants with disabilities.
- Merced Community Action Agency has a presence onsite to provide a variety of services to disadvantaged participants.
- AARP is currently an onsite partner in Merced, and provides volunteers to obtain unpaid work experience that are utilized by MCWDB.
- CA Department of Rehabilitation is a colocated partner at the Merced AJCC that provides disability and reentry services to participant populations.
- California Indian Manpower Consortium is a non-colocated partner that provides services to Native American populations upon referral.
- Housing Authority of Merced County is a non-colocated partner that provides services, including subsidized housing, to qualified individuals upon referral.
- Merced Adult School is a partner who has a presence at the Los Baños AJCC that provides adult education, career courses and GED/high school equivalency preparation. In the Merced, these services are provided upon referral to the Merced Adult School.
- Merced College is a non-colocated partner with whom the MCWDB contracts to provide training to participant populations.
- Merced County Office of Education is a non-colocated partner and is the contracted youth provider selected through competitive procurement by the MCWDB. Services are also provided through referral.
- Human Services Agency of Merced County is a non-colocated partner that the MCWDB works closely with to serve TANF client populations.

Please see the attached list (Attachment B) of co-located partners at the AJCCs in Merced County. Each of the listed partners has signed MOU Phase I and are in negotiations on Phase II. MCWDB anticipates that all colocated partners will contribute to infrastructure costs. Non-colocated partners may contribute to shared staffing positions, and programs support for common customers.

v. Executed MOUs and Cooperative Agreements

MCWDB has included a copy of the signed Phase I MOU and a draft of the Phase II MOU, which is currently being negotiated with all the local partners.(and/or progress reports on the development of said agreements and MOUs) - See attachment C.

vi. Strategies to Provide Indian and Native Americans with Equal Access to AJCC services (WIOA Section 166)

MCWDB recognizes the unique employment barriers that Native Americans face in today's economy. MCWDB will work to formalize a written policy and strategy to increase access for Native Americans to local AJCC services and partners. First, MCWDB will collect and analyze demographic data on the local Native American population to determine their place of residence, educational attainment, and levels of employment/unemployment. MCWDB will strive to build partnerships which will help the board to understand local Native Americans' service needs and discuss strategies to provide them with appropriate services, especially if individuals live in remote areas and need access to services virtually. MCWDB will then discuss the ability to commit staff to conduct outreach at Native American-

partner sites and/or local areas in which there are dense Native American populations. MCWDB will also provide staff with tools and training on cultural sensitivity to ensure that staff appropriately communicate with these customers to best fulfill their needs. MCWDB hopes that by striving to better understand Native American employment and social service needs, MCWDB and its partners can conduct more targeted outreach and provide more necessary services.

In addition to the use of data described above, EDD ensures both the Section 166 and 167 grantee eligible individuals have access to the AJCC services. There is also an Indian manpower representative on MCWDB to ensure that equal access is provided. Additionally, there is a MOU between the MCWDB and the California Indian Manpower Consortium, in which both parties agree to provide access to services to participants.

vii. Strategies to Provide Migrant Seasonal Farmworkers with Equal Access to AJCC services (WIOA Section 167)

As MCWDB continues to utilize data and LMI to enhance service delivery, it will examine demographic data on Migrant Seasonal Farmworker (MSFW) populations and other immigrant populations to understand their unique employment and supportive service needs. In regards to MSFW populations, MCWDB will collect and analyze demographic data on the local MSFW and immigrant populations to determine their place of residence, country of origin, native language, cultural practices, educational attainment, transferrable skills, and levels of employment/unemployment. Additionally, MCWDB will provide staff with tools and training on cultural sensitivity to ensure that staff appropriately communicates with these customers to best fulfill their needs. MCWDB will discuss the possibility of committing staff to conduct outreach to MSFW during their work season either at their places of work or at partner sites. Depending on customer need, MCWDB will also craft strategies to increase partnership with ELL providers to serve immigrant communities in which English is not the native language. In addition, MCWDB will develop strategies to collaborate with employers for short-term OJTs to provide learning opportunities to these skilled clients and incentivize employers' hiring of them. Lastly, MCWDB will consider the use of multi-generational approaches to serve both MSFW/immigrants and their children with appropriate supports. This may involve co-programming with partners in one physical location to create a "multi-generational" or "multi-service" center that can provide the appropriate employment, training, and supportive services to an entire MSFW/immigrant family.

The collocation of EDD and CVOC in the MCWDB office ensures that Section 167 grantee eligible individuals have access to the AJCC services. Individuals who have been seasonally employed come into the office to file for unemployment and utilize the resource room to register in CalJOBS to search for employment. When they access the AJCC and register in CalJOBS MCWDB provides customers with a scan card to track their activities and MCWDB staff explains the job wall, resource room, sign in sheet for EDD services, the Plato Lab for ABE and GED/Hi-Set preparation to get a high school equivalence. Customers are invited to attend a scheduled orientation to learn more about available services.

viii. AJCCs as an On-Ramp for the Regional Sector Pathways

The two AJCCs in Merced County have and will continue to be an on-ramp for the regional Sector pathways. The Central California Workforce Collaboration has had numerous opportunities to work together to apply for a variety of grants, in industries such as healthcare, manufacturing and public infrastructure. Through these opportunities target populations, long-term unemployed, veterans, and disabled individuals have been able to access training funded through regional grants and the cooperation with the other Workforce Development Areas. MCWDB will continue to develop career pathways that service not only Merced County local labor needs, but those across the region.

E. Programs, Populations, and Partners

i. Coordination of Workforce and Economic Development Activities and Promotion of Entrepreneurial Skills Training and Microenterprise Services

The MCWDB strategy to support the creation, sustainability, and growth of microenterprises and entrepreneurs includes: supporting small business development workshops sponsored by our partners, seeking to make presentations in front of these groups about services offered by Worknet, and conduct entrepreneurial presentations for the business community. Small businesses are provided advice, recruitment services, placing of job ads, and local and regional labor market information through the Worknet website at <http://www.co.merced.ca.us/>. Additionally, small businesses are also informed about tax incentives, and provided information about On-the-Job Training (OJT), ESE program information to help offset payroll expenses

MCWDB works with the county and city of Merced economic development divisions to provide outreach to help with the expansion of new business, including entrepreneurship and microenterprise. MCWDB provides entrepreneurship and microenterprise skills training through recommendations and consultation with the UC Merced Venture Lab. MCWDB also works closely with SCORE to ensure every participant receives training that coincides with their goals.

ii. Adult and Dislocated Worker Employment and Training Activities

WIOA provides states and Local Workforce Investment Areas (LWIA) a unique opportunity to develop employment and training systems tailored specifically to the needs of the state and local area. MCWDB contracts with service providers in Merced County to offer employment and training services to support jobseekers through all phases of their employment and re-employment process. The following section details these services.

America's Job Center of California (AJCC) On-Site Resources

AJCCs provide onsite resources including the following: a career services resource room; access to computers and the internet; office equipment (e.g. copiers, fax and telephones); access to business resources and interview rooms; individualized career assistance and career counseling; referral to career training; GED and ESL programs; and, access to Labor Market Information and assistance with program placement. MCWDB addresses employers' skills needs for their current and future workforce by working with training providers as they design and implement training programs. Training providers will involve employers to provide input into the design of relevant training, as well as offer feedback on the effectiveness of the training. This coordinated approach to addressing training providers' needs will ensure that they are providing "just in time," relevant training. MCWDB and training providers will utilize industry cluster studies and labor market data on growth occupations, as well as the State's online Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL), to align curriculum with in-demand skills needs.

AJCC Career and Training Services

WIOA is designed to help jobseekers access employment, training, education and supportive services to succeed in the labor market. Basic Career Services, or "universal access," are made available to all participants in an effort to meet a variety of needs of both Adult and Dislocated Workers. MCWDB provides Career Services under the categories of universal services, basic career services, individualized career services, training and follow-up services. The service delivery approach allows for maximum flexibility in service provision while meeting participant needs.

Building Inspector Training

The Deputy County Building Official in the Merced County Public Works Building Division communicated to representatives of the MCWDB and Merced College that there is need for more trained building inspectors. The final result of that initial conversation is a new program to prepare

candidates for the State of California Residential Building Code Certification Exam, which enables individuals to qualify for entry-level jobs. A Certified Inspector has opportunities with the local and State government, private consulting firms and business, as well as, real estate firms and can work in inspection testing labs and as an entry-level Permit Counter Technician and Plan Checker. The median annual wage for construction and building inspectors was \$57,340 in May 2015 and \$27.57 per hour. Employment of construction and building inspectors is projected to grow 8 percent from 2014 to 2024, about as fast as the average for all occupations. (*US Bureau of Labor Statistics*)

iii. Coordination of Rapid Response (RR) Activities

Description of the process for Rapid Response Activities

MCWDB and their partners' goals are to try and prevent Rapid Response activities and focus efforts on layoff aversion activities instead. The local area responds to Rapid Response in three different ways:

- In joint partnership both regionally and locally, the Merced Business Resource Team (BRT) and other staff coordinate with the EDD, HSA (Merced Human Services Agency), and HUD on surveying businesses to identify training and skills gaps, barriers and solutions to growth, business satisfaction on partner services, continuous improvement to existing systems, unique and timely targeted training, layoff aversion and rapid response efforts.
- The Merced Business Resource Team utilizes rapid response as a proactive intermediary for priority industry sectors to educate and plan with business in the community in the event rapid response becomes necessary.
- Rapid Response Early Warning signs such as those observed by the EDD and MCWDB staff based on traffic patterns in the AJCC and receiving a Worker Adjustment Retraining and Notification Act ("WARN") letter from the employer and the state. When the letter is received, the BRT and its partners will work closely with the employer and employees to deliver as many services as possible before their layoff occurs. The goal here is to avoid any time in between employment opportunities for the employees affected by the WARN. MCWDB is now utilizing the EconoView system based upon data from Dunn & Bradstreet to identify stress levels of businesses and provide appropriate outreach before the business reaches the WARN notice stage.

iv. Youth Workforce Development Activities

Through its youth provider programs in the local area, MCWDB seeks to find ways to address the above issues as well as to provide job readiness, placement, and retention services to assist youth in career pathway and skills development. The following section examines MCWDB's priorities and strategies around youth workforce development activities in Merced County.

Description and Assessment of Youth Workforce Development Activities

MCWDB currently contracts with MCOE to provide youth services to those that are out of school from ages 18-24. MCOE provides the following services to youth:

- Training;
- Work based learning; and
- Classroom based learning: When possible, services are delivered to this population and collaborated with those being delivered to the adult populations supported by other programs in the AJCC. This training includes a work component, either paid or unpaid, as a complimentary component to classroom based learning.

MCWDB also participates in career day, which involves approximately 1000 high school students. During career day, MCWDB assists with the facilitation and coordination of the annual youth conference that exposes high school students to careers in the health care industry through the utilization of several panels of experts. MCWDB uses the youth conference to recruit potential

participants/customers and explain to high school students career planning and upskilling while they are sophomores to stimulate their future career planning.

The LWDB is participating in providing local in school/out of school youth an opportunity to go to a state four-year college for a few days to receive counseling and experience college culture. The RPU as a whole sponsored 60-80 participants from across the RPU to participate in this program in PY 15-16.

v. Coordination of Education and Workforce Development Activities

MCWDB is working to coordinate relevant secondary and post-secondary education programs with workforce development activities as a method to coordinate strategies, enhance services and avoid duplication of efforts. MCWDB recognizes the value of coordination among partners as essential to growth and prosperity of its residents. The following section details multiple partnerships and collaborations through which MCWDB will coordinate educational programs to enhance service delivery.

MCWDB through its contract with its TANF partner, who contracts with the Merced Adult School (MAS) in Los Banos to provide daily classroom training concerning high school equivalency/GED, and adult basic education. This training is provided onsite at the Los Banos AJCC. In Merced, the AJCC refers the customers to the MAS. The Merced AJCC does pay for testing fees.

The following training programs are being coordinated with secondary and post-secondary education:

1. Building Inspector Training-Merced College: A Certified Inspector has many employment opportunities with the local and State government, private consulting firms and business, as well as, real estate firms. The median annual wage for construction and building inspectors was \$57,340 in May 2015 and \$27.57 per hour. Employment of construction and building inspectors is projected to grow 8 percent from 2014 to 2024, about as fast as the average for all occupations. (*US Bureau of Labor Statistics*)
3. LiUNA Training-Merced College/Laborers' Union: The Laborer's International Union of North America (LIUNA) pre-apprenticeship training is brought locally for the first time to Merced County. It was designed for 45 workforce participants in total. Merced College will facilitate three (3) Pre-Apprenticeship LiUNA Training classes. This training responds to the regional expansion in public infrastructure, construction and green energy job areas. Pre-apprenticeship construction trainees are a vital need as MCWDB foresees the economic growth in the next 5 years with the UC-Merced 2020 project; the high speed rail; the expansion of highway and road construction projects; and, the restructure of Main Street, the Merced Mall and Merced's iconic buildings.

MCWDB is partnering on veteran training in the manufacturing sector with secondary and post-secondary partners. MCWDB coordinates with the UC Merced Venture Lab to supply services to participants and coordinates with post-secondary and secondary education to hold job fairs to provide opportunity to participants. Services and opportunities between MCWDB are heavily coordinated to avoid the possibility of duplication and to enhance services to participants as much as possible. To this end, MCWDB conducts meetings every two weeks with Merced College to discuss strategies and to other ways to partner to bring the maximum amount of effective service and relevant trainings to our participants.

vi. Supportive Services

MCWDB provides supportive services in coordination with its co-sponsored training in order to help participants succeed in whatever program they attend. This includes, but is not limited to providing the

following:

- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)
- Work boots
- Tools
- Nursing equipment
- Assistance with transportation
- Child Care
- Testing fees
- Costs of Certifications
- Costs of GED
- RN/LVN Certifications
- Building Inspector Certification Testing Fees

MCWDB has a policy in place that outlines the supportive services provided. MCWDB staff assess the needs of the participants on a case by case basis to determine each individual's needs.

MCWDB provides information to its participants regarding the availability of supportive services and makes appropriate referrals to those services and assistance. AJCC staff provide a variety of both direct and indirect supportive services and referrals to its WIOA participants. Supportive services support includes the following:

- Design of programs and provision of supportive services that will support advancement to career pathways to high skilled, high paying jobs;
- Support to those who are unemployed, underemployed, and those anticipating layoff;
- Provision of participants' access to information regarding education and training opportunities and supportive services; and
- Referral to services such as childcare, transportation, counseling, child health assistance (through the State's Medicaid program), assistance through the earned income tax credit, housing counseling (through HUD), and other supportive services to facilitate program completion.

The AJCCs work with community partners to identify and locate child and or dependent care; transportation; cash assistance for auto repair and other automobile-related costs, uniforms, tools, or other items required for employment; and emergency services, such as utilities, food, and health and medical services. Customers in need are regularly referred to local community partners to address supportive service needs and to ensure those needs do not become a future barrier to training or work. The following supportive services are provided to participants in accordance with state and federal regulations:

- *Transportation:* The AJCCs work to provide individual bus tickets or gas vouchers to clients requiring transportation to attend training or job interviews.
- *Childcare:* Customers are screened for eligibility for CalWORKs funded supportive services. These services include transitional child care. If the participant is not qualified, then MCWDB provides assistance with childcare.
- *Housing:* MCWDB works to support participants in securing permanent housing, and other supportive housing services through rental assistance programs, security deposit assistance, and utility assistance.

MCWDB aims to provide helpful and reliable information and referral of services to community organizations in order to avoid duplication of resources. Staff assess participant supportive service needs, record those needs in the case file, and assist in meeting those needs in order to ensure full participation in job search and training activities and to avoid further barriers to employment.

vii. Maximizing Coordination with Wagner-Peyser Act Services

The Employment Development Department (EDD) serves as a core partner in the AJCC and provides Basic Career Services which fall under Labor Exchange services available to all eligible customers, including WIOA Title I (Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth formula) programs, Title II Adult Education and Literacy Act programs, and Wagner-Peyser (WP) Act employment services. Basic

Career Services may involve activities such as outreach, intake, and orientation to the AJCC system. Other services may also be provided by WP staff such as job preparation, referral to programs and services, provision of labor market information, referral to supportive services, assistance in establishing financial aid for training purposes, and assistance in providing information on unemployment insurance programs. The MCWDB will also be convening quarterly partner meetings with all partners (collocated and not), which will be coordinated in part by the one stop operator. These meetings will address and formulate further plans, assurances, and strategies for maximizing coordination, improving service delivery, and avoiding duplication of services through the one stop system.

MCWDB acknowledges that the collaboration between WIOA Adult and Dislocated worker funding programs and WP Employment Services is critical to the success of the AJCC system. AJCC staff work closely with WP partners to offer seamless delivery of programs and services such as job search workshops, assistance in identifying jobs and training opportunities, interview preparation, and resume writing. WP staff collaborate with AJCC staff to make available additional jobseeker resources such as tools to assist in job identification, including LMI, O*NET Online, and other career exploration tools (e.g. California Occupational Guides, mySkills, myFuture, and My Next Move). In the integrated service delivery model, services and activities are designed to encourage coordination, improve employment outcomes, and eliminate duplication of services among system partners. Services are regularly adapted to meet the needs of special populations, including veterans and jobseekers age 55 and above.

WP-funded EDD staff are co-located at some of the AJCC locations in the local service area. Staff oversight and service delivery responsibilities are shared. MCWDB is collocating with Employment Development Department in Merced and an EDD Representative is collocated in our Los Baños AJCC and has been for over two years. This arrangement allows us to provide a broad range of services in the comprehensive centers, without the possibility of duplication. It also has the effect of maximizing our coordination through more expedient communication with our Wagner-Peyser Partner.

viii. Title I Coordination with Title II Adult Education and Family Literacy Activities

MCWDB works very closely with adult education in order to get the greatest number of services to our clients. To facilitate this MCWDB conducts a meeting every two weeks with adult education, and attend industry focused forums together. MCWDB will commence a full review of the adult education plan to determine compatibility and consistency with the MCWDB local plan, then MCWDB plans to meet with adult education representatives to discuss its recommendations and avenues of alignment.

MCWDB recognizes that adult education and literacy are essential skills for employment. In addressing this through the AJCCs, MCWDB will continue to offer strategies for coordinated delivery of adult education and literacy services as designated under WIOA. MCWDB is actively engaged in strengthening efforts and building systems between Title I and Title II programs to provide education and employment opportunities for adults at all levels. It is anticipated that the leveraging of resources will benefit participants of both program systems, through efforts such as co-enrollment of shared participants. The following section describes MCWDB's engagements with adult education and literacy providers in line with this plan.

Collaboration with Adult Schools and Consortia

Merced Adult School is providing on sight basic education and GED/high school equivalency training in the Los Baños AJCC. The Merced AJCC refers customers to the MAS as appropriate.

MOUs with Adult Basic Education Providers

There is currently a Phase I MOU that has been executed. Phase II MOU is currently in the process of being negotiated and signed.

Application Process for Local Boards

The CDE developed the following four-step process for the Local Board review of WIOA, Title II AEFLA applications:

1. Eligible providers will submit their AEFLA applications to the CDE through an online system.
2. The CDE will provide Local Area Administrators with password access to the online AEFLA applications for review of their alignment with local plans.
3. Local Area Administrators must complete and submit recommendations for promoting alignment with the local plan through the online system. The review and recommendation process begins on May 17, 2017, and ends on May 31, 2017.
4. The CDE will consider the results of the review by Local Boards in making awards.

The EDD and CDE believe this approach will assist in making the AEFLA application process fair, equitable, and efficient in terms of submitting an application, implementing Local Board review, and receiving recommendations from the Local Board concerning alignment with the approved local plan. More information on the review process will be provided as it becomes available.

MCWDB is highly committed to ensuring on-going collaboration and partnership with the Title II providers and anticipates that this process will greatly benefit the residents of Merced County through a co-located and streamlined service delivery process. MCWDB will look to coordinate this review into the MOU the Tier II partners sign on behalf of the AJCC system.

ix. Services for Limited English Proficient Individuals

English proficiency is key to an individual's access to higher-paying jobs. Becoming proficient in English increases populations of immigrants, refugees, and new Americans engagement with their new country and the ability to perform basic life functions, as well as to find and retain jobs. For many immigrants, refugees, and new Americans, contextualized workplace-based English language classes are helpful for becoming job ready in a specific field. English Language Learners may be eligible for priority of service under WIOA sec. 134(c)(3)(E), which provides priority to "recipients of public assistance, other low-income individuals, and individuals who are basic skills deficient."

In accordance with the principles of universal access and customer-centered design under WIOA, the following provides ways AJCCs deliver high quality services to individuals who are English Language Learners and individuals who face substantial cultural barriers, including immigrants, refugees, and new Americans:

- Provide Excellent Customer Service to Job Seekers, Workers, and Businesses.
 - Reflect a welcoming environment to all customer groups who are served by the AJCCs;
 - Develop, offer, and deliver quality business services (note that training services authorized under Title I also include English language proficiency training if provided in combination with another training service);
 - Improve the skills of job seeker and worker customers;
 - Create opportunities for individuals at all skill levels and levels of experience;
 - Provide career services that motivate, support, and empower customers (such as providing individualized career services which may include an assessment of English proficiency coupled with English language acquisition services if related to an employment need);
 - Value skill development;
 - Use WIOA's Priority of Service Provision;
 - Consider target populations in developing programs so that robust programs are available for those populations;
 - Develop outreach strategies and techniques to reach target populations; and

- Monitor whether programs are meeting the needs of target populations, including particular training needs and wraparound services.
- Reflect Innovative and Effective Service Design
 - Ensure meaningful access to all customers;
 - Use an integrated and expert intake process for all customers entering the AJCCs;
 - Design and implement practices that actively engage industry sectors;
 - Balance traditional labor exchange services with strategic talent development within a regional economy;
 - Include both virtual and center-based service delivery for job-seekers, workers, and employers; and
 - Incorporate innovative and evidence-based delivery models.
- Operate with Integrated Management Systems and High-Quality Staffing
 - Reflect the establishment of robust partnerships;
 - Organize and integrate services by function (rather than by program);
 - Develop and maintain integrated case management systems;
 - Develop and implement operational policies;
 - Use common performance indicators;
 - Train and equip AJCC staff; and
 - Staff centers with linguistically and culturally competent staff, including highly trained career counselors and multi-lingual staff in languages spoken by the largest customer groups.

It is MCWDB's plan to provide English, Limited, or Non-English speaking individuals with services from the AJCC and to ensure information about services and benefits are communicated to non-English speaking and LEP individuals in a language which they understand. A client will be considered LEP if he or she is not able to speak, read, write or understand the English language that allows he or she to interact effectively with the workforce system staff. LEP individuals will be made aware of the availability of free interpretive services and translation services when it appears that the individual is not able to communicate effectively in English. Such services will be provided during all normal business hours, without unnecessary delay. Notice of availability of free interpretive services is available and visible in the form of signage at primary points of contact in the reception and waiting areas. During the course of the provision of services to individuals with basic skills challenges, the AJCC will coordinate the need to address any skills gaps which exist with the Adult Education providers.

Merced County WDB works closely with CVOC to insure services are provided to ESL and migrant worker populations. CVOC services include vocational education, remedial education, English Language instruction, housing assistance, energy payment assistance, emergency supportive services, transportation, emergency food, youth employment, health care acquisition, child care services and community education services. CVOC has effectively provided a comprehensive package of services to over a hundred thousand customers.

Merced WDB has a Plato Lab available to assist participants with ESL and evaluation, including help obtaining GED or high school equivalency. Merced WDB offers Rosetta Stone to participant to increase their ability with ESL. At Merced WDB, translation services include, but are not limited to the following: Spanish, French, Hmong, Thai, Laotian, and Portuguese.

The LWDB refers participants to the Merced Adult School pursuant to our MOU for: ESL, Adult Basic Education/Pre-High School, GED, Career Technical Education, and Family literacy.

F. Grants and Grant Administration

i. Disbursal of Grant Funds

The designated recipient for the disbursement of grant funds under WIOA is the Merced County Workforce Development Board and the Merced County Department of Workforce Investment, which is staff to the LWDB, as designated by the chief local elected official under WIOA Section 107(d)(12) (B)(i).

ii. Competitive Process to Award Sub-Grants and Contracts

MCWDB follows all sub-grant and contracting policy and procedures as required by WIOA and the County of Merced. Such policies and procedures can be found at the Merced County Office of Administrative Services

The sub-grant and contracting processes for all WIOA Title I activities follow all WIOA and Merced County requirements. For Youth Formula funds MCWDB utilizes a competitive Request for Proposal (RFP) process to implement service programs. The RFP seeks service providers for a five-year cycle of service delivery. Proposals are rated, ranked, reviewed, and recommendations for funding are presented to the full membership of the WDB. MCWDB provides the career services for Adult and Dislocated Workers currently and is in the process of applying for a waiver in order to continue to offer those career services as it has done in the past.

G. Performance Goals

i. Negotiated Levels of Performance

To view Negotiated Performance Measures, see Attachment H. A guiding principle of MCWDB is to connect employers to a skilled workforce and assist individuals to develop the skills they need to thrive in the workplace. The pursuit of these outcomes supports MCWDB's goal of achieving State and federal performance accountability measures. A variety of strategies will be enacted to ensure that the local areas workforce obtains employment with sustainable wages.

Performance under WIOA

MCWDB has previously negotiated with the Governor and the Chief Elected Official consistent with WIOA Section 116(c), to reach an agreement on local performance levels for the local area as outlined in WIOA. With implementation of the new legislation, Local Area Performance Measures have been approved and include the following measures for all WIOA Formula populations (Adults and Dislocated Workers and Youth)

PY 2017/2018 Local Area Performance Negotiations

The State mandated that Local Areas negotiate performance for PY 2017/2018 prior to the September 30, 2016 deadline. Merced County as the lead for the RPU worked regionally to develop performance measures across the region as part of a collaborative effort. However, during negotiations, the State indicated that PY 2017/2018 would be renegotiated during the 3rd or 4th quarter of this program year (between January 1, 2017 and June 30, 2017). There is anticipation that there will be minimal flexibility going forward due to the introduction of a tool [Statistical Adjustment Model (SAM)] that will be used to measure past performance and calculate future performance levels. Adjustments to performance levels may be made during negotiations in order to account for expected economic conditions and characteristics of individuals to be served in the local area.

In the future, the State will allow Local Boards to engage their stakeholders, boards and their respective Chief Elected Officials (CEO) in discussions regarding Local Area Performance Planning prior to entering into negotiations.

H. High Performance Board (HPB) Efforts

i. Compliance with State Issued AJCC Policies

MCWDB is designated as a high performing WDB since PY 2012-2013. To remain a High Performing Board (HPB), MCWDB is in compliance with all state-issued AJCC policies including the Priority of Service, WIOA Phase I Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), and WIOA Phase II MOU. The Phase I MOUs have been negotiated, signed by all Merced County partners, and sent to the State as required. The Phase II MOU is in the process of being negotiated in preparation for submittal and implementation by June 30, 2017. MCWDB has already begun meeting with colocated partners to discuss infrastructure costs. In that the next HPB certification process will take place mid-way through the local plan, MCWDB will await formal guidance on certification and continue to adopt statutory best practices involving planning efforts with partners and alignment with regional labor market needs. MCWDB looks forward to the State's formal release of high-performing board criteria in 2019. In the meantime, consistent with the State's WIOA Combined Plan, MCWDB is aligning its efforts both locally and regionally with the State's following three priority policies.

WIOA Adult Program Priority of Service (POS)

Services which are provided to Adult and Dislocated Workers can serve as a pathway to maintaining and building skills essential to participation in the middle class. WIOA prescribes a focus on serving individuals with barriers to employment and requires a process which ensures access to services on a priority basis. Priority has been established with respect to funds allocated for adult and training activities. AJCCs must provide priority to recipients of public assistance, other low-income individuals, and individuals who are basic skills deficient. Veterans and eligible spouses receive priority of service for all DOL funded WIOA job training programs.

Priority is provided in the following order:

1. Covered persons (veterans and all eligible spouses) for WIOA Adult formula funds. This refers to veterans and eligible spouses who are low-income and recipients of public assistance. They receive first priority with Adult formula funds.
2. Second are non-covered persons who are low-income or recipients of public assistance. They are then given priority for Adult formula funds.
3. Third, when eligibility requirements are met and all other statuses are equal, veterans and eligible spouses will receive priority over individuals who do not meet priority of services definition.
4. Fourth are other individuals not included in WIOA's targeted priority populations. POS may be applied across three different types of programs: 1) universal access; 2) discretionary targeting programs; and 3) statutory targeting programs, like National Emergency Grant (NEG) or others.

MCWDB has implemented and updated its POS policy which reinforces the EDD Directive WSD 15-14 and confirms the updates effective September 16, 2016 regarding the Priority of Service Policy for Adult funded WIOA career and training services. The Board may establish additional priority groups for the local area (e.g. individuals with disabilities, ex-offenders, etc.).

The overall MOU development process is taking place in two phases.

WIOA Phase I Memorandum of Understanding

Phase I of each completed MOU addresses service coordination and collaboration amongst the partners. Each Phase 1 MOU has been completed and authorized representatives of the Local Board, CEO, and AJCC partner(s) have signed it. During the Phase 1 Service Coordination, all required partners in the local area have agreed to shared roles in the service provision to customers of the AJCC system. The completed MOU serves as a foundation for MCWDB and the AJCC partners to create a unified service delivery system that meets the needs of shared customers. The major components of MCWDB's MOU address the following:

1. Shared Customers;
2. Shared Services; and

3. Shared Costs Joint infrastructure funding, which is a critical part of establishing the foundation needed to support integrated service delivery.

The MOU development process included defining the mission and vision of the AJCC, identifying the partners to be included in the MOU process, defining the system and its design, and describing the services to be offered by each of the partners for shared customers. Each of the required partners has also agreed to contribute toward the shared maintenance of the AJCC system. which is a customer-focused approach to service delivery.

WIOA Phase II Memorandum of Understanding

Phase II, which is now in process, addresses how to functionally and fiscally sustain the unified system described in Phase I through the use of resource sharing and joint infrastructure costs. The State has compiled a matrix of the AJCC required partners at the state and local level as well as the preferred points of contact for MOU negotiations and signatures, which MCWDB has met. Phase II of the MOU is referred to as the Resource Sharing Agreement. This agreement will be established to determine shared infrastructure and system costs. This will allow all partners to benefit from having the AJCC as a physical location available for use by clients. There are currently two levels of support:

1. All mandated partners with staff located (full time, part time, intermittently) must pay with funds or in-kind resources for the infrastructure of the physical location. This cannot be personnel costs, but should be items such as rent, equipment, or technology which supports the site infrastructure.
2. All mandated partners that are not located in the Comprehensive AJCC must contribute their proportionate share to sustain the workforce system. This can be personnel costs, services, or other non-infrastructure costs. The State is currently gathering data to determine the guidelines for those mandated partners to share resources. MCWDB has been asked to identify how many funds the partners are contributing to the system through their own funding. MCWDB will await further guidance from the State as to how to utilize the resource information. Phase II of each MOU will be completed no later than June 30, 2017.

I. Training Activities and Services (WIOA Section 134)

i. Individual Training Accounts and Customer Choice

WIOA is designed to help jobseekers access employment, education, training, and support services to succeed in the labor market and to match employers with the skilled workers they need to compete in the global economy. Training services are an important part of workforce development and addressing barriers to employment. Training provides the opportunity to prepare jobseekers to obtain industry valued credentials and to obtain skills which are in-demand and meet the needs of employers. The following section explains MCWDB's coordination of training services to ensure customer choice:

Eligible Training Provider List

Under WIOA, (TEGL 41-40), participants in need of training services to enhance their job readiness or career pathway may access career training through a list of state-approved training providers and their state-approved training programs. Training services can be critical to employment for most workers. Participants can select from the list of eligible training provider (ETP) programs that meet their needs. The workforce development system established under WIOA emphasizes Informed Consumer Choice, job-driven training, provider performance, and continuous improvement. The quality and selection of providers and programs of training services, including Registered Apprenticeship programs and others, is vital to achieving these core principles.

States, in partnership with local WDBs, identify ETPs that are qualified to receive WIOA funds to train adults and dislocated workers, including those with disabilities. Each State maintains a list of ETPs and their programs. The list is accompanied by relevant performance and cost information and must

be made widely available, including in electronic formats, and presented in a way that is easily understood, in order to maximize Informed Consumer Choice and serve all significant population groups. California's Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) is disseminated publicly through the AJCC system, and its partner programs. In an effort to populate the State's ETPL, MCWDB strives to ensure that there are sufficient numbers of ETPs offering a variety of career and training services to the local area. MCWDB further works to ensure the listing contains an ample amount of providers with expertise in assisting individuals with disabilities and adults in need of education and literacy activities in order to offer the maximum level of consumer choice.

Additional MCWDB Responsibilities

MCWDB has several functions around training providers including: making determinations on the initial eligibility of entities providing a program of training services; renewing the eligibility of providers; and considering the possible termination of an eligible provider due to the provider's submission of inaccurate eligibility and performance information or the provider's substantial violation of WIOA. MCWDB also maintains the authority to set additional eligibility criteria, information requirements, and minimum performance levels for local providers beyond what is required by the Governor's procedure.

MCWDB also makes Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) available as the primary method for procuring training services under WIOA. A training contract may be made available in other situations, such as with OJT opportunities, if there are insufficient numbers of training provider or if training services can be more effectively offered by a community based organization or institution of higher learning. All training services obtained must be linked to in-demand employment opportunities in the local area. The selection of training services and providers are offered in order to offer customer choice, and is linked to an in-demand occupation, which is informed by positive performance ratings of training providers and coordinated with other sources of financial assistance. Specialized training services are available through the AJCC system for veterans, spouses of veterans, English language learners, low-income individuals, youth and adults with disabilities, and participants with special needs and/or barriers to employment.

Participant Requirements

MCWDB adopts the best practice of requiring participants to complete the "Steps to Success" prior to referral for training. Steps to Success are tasks to be completed prior to consideration for participation in WIOA funded programs. As each of the steps or tasks are completed, an AJCC staff member verifies the successful completion of the steps.

Participants interested in receiving training must complete an objective assessment and individual employment plan which determines their priority sector interest. They must also establish that they have been unable to obtain employment that leads to self-sufficiency through intensive services. This determination may be made by demonstrating a lack of adequate job skills; insufficient education for the job they are pursuing; lack of job orders; lack of transferrable skills; lack of work readiness skills; economic conditions in workforce area; and the fact that the industry may be restructuring. If these conditions are met and the participant can demonstrate that they have participated in orientation, completed an objective assessment, developed an individual employment plan, received counseling and career planning, then they may seek enrollment in training.

Prior to enrolling in training, WIOA requires that the individual apply for financial aid, including PELL grants. Participants must complete LMI research, which provides an analysis to ensure the link between in-demand jobs and the appropriate training connection is made. They are encouraged complete an incumbent interview in the field of interest. They are encouraged to visit the training program and or school of their choice, tour the facility, and have conversations held with other current students. The family finances must be reviewed with the jobseeker to ensure the family has assessed self-sufficiency while in training.

Refer to Attachment 6 for the draft ITA to replace current ITA. All parties who go to training receive a personalized individual ITA for the training as part of MCWDB's ongoing process. Please see Attachment I for the Draft ITA.

J. Public Transparency, Accessibility and Inclusivity

i. Public Comment Period

Outreach strategies to get input from CBOs and target populations on the plan utilized were community forums and conference calls with representatives from partners and other. A master invite list of who attended and who was invited is attached to the San Joaquin Valley Regional Plan and incorporated herein by reference.

MCWDB will continue to engage relevant stakeholders throughout the planning process, including the public comment period. MCWDB has convened MCWDB members, leadership, staff and relevant stakeholders, including representatives from Adult Education, Community Colleges, Vocational Rehabilitation, system contractors, local CBOs, WIOA and CalWORKs clients, and employers, throughout the strategic planning process. Their feedback was garnered through public meetings, focus groups, interviews, and other forms of communication (e.g. phone calls). MCWDB will provide these stakeholders with the draft Local Plan to allow for their continued feedback. MCWDB will also provide this plan to all of its MOU partners to ensure that their input is included in the strategies and processes set forth in the plan.

In regards to public posting, the MCWDB 2017-2020 WIOA Local Plan and subsequent updates were posted on the MCWDB Website for an initial 30-day public comment period beginning on January 23, 2017. Hard copies were available at: MCWDB office and accommodations were made for any party need a copy translated to another language. Notice of this publication and comment period will be announced through the following outlets:

- Publication in Merced County newspapers;
- Posting to the MCWDB website at www.mercedwib.com;
- Public Service Announcement provided to the County clerks in Merced County to be posted at all courthouses;
- Email notices distributed to the Chairperson of all County Board supervisors within Merced County and all MCWDB board members; and
- AJCC partners and local community based organizations will be notified of the publication and 30-day comment period via email.

The posting period commenced on January 23, 2017 and terminated February 22, 2017. The published, attachments, comments, MCWDB response(s) to comments, and a copy of the notice will be forwarded to the California Department of Workforce Development in the manner required in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Final Local Plan Guidelines. Public comments were delivered to Lance Lippincott, by phone at 209-724-2042, by email at lippincott@co.merced.ca.us or first class mail at 1880 Wardrobe Avenue, Merced, California 95341.

The MCWDB WIOA Local Plan, updates, and related materials are available on the MCWDB Website. Notification of the public comment period was posted in a newspaper of general circulation for the county and documents were made available at both Merced County comprehensive centers, as well as the website. Notices that the public comment period has opened will be sent to the Board of Supervisors and all partners in order for them to review and comment.

After conclusion of the 30-day public comment period, members of leadership met to review all comments received and determine which comments were to be incorporated into the plan, which will be revised to better represent the work, and which will not be incorporated for a variety of reasons. To promote transparency, all public comments and responses are included as *Attachment G*.

K. Common Intake and Case Management Efforts

i. Current Intake Processes and Allowance for Co-Enrollment

Intake and Case Management

The adult and dislocated worker programs are not “work first programs.” Local boards may not adopt a “work first” approach in developing local procedures and eligibility criteria for levels of service.

For an individual to be enrolled in WIOA, the following must occur:

- (1) The individual must complete the application/eligibility determination process;
- (2) The individual must provide the documentation required to substantiate his/her eligibility and
- (3) Staff must enter the appropriate activity code and grant code(s) for the individual into the CalJOBS system.

For adults and dislocated workers, enrollment occurs the first day on which the individual actually begins receiving Staff-Assisted career services.

Local policy and procedures for time limits covering the application process.

Customers and staff will have no longer than:

- a) 30 days from the date of the application to obtain documentation; and
- b) 30 days from the receipt of the documentation to review the applicant's information and confirm eligibility. If the eligibility is greater than 90 days, the eligibility information must be updated and re-determined.

MCWDB has chosen to adopt the comprehensive table of criteria and documentation in the Eligibility Technical Assistance Guide issued September 9, 2016. However, the use of the applicant statement is only allowable to document those items that are not verifiable or not readily available. The applicant's difficulty in obtaining the documentation does not need to entail privation or suffering undue hardship to justify using an applicant statement. In taking an applicant statement, it is not necessary to obtain corroboration unless there is reason not to believe the applicant. MCWDB should document in the case file the effort made to verify the element of eligibility. The applicable male's compliance with Military Selective Service and the individual's eligibility to work (right to work documents as described in the I-9 guide) will be documented as required.

When the eligibility is reviewed, all programs for which the customer is eligible at current time are cited in the case notes, to allow case managers to co-enroll appropriately. Case managers are required to make contact with enrolled customers at least once every thirty days for most grants. However, exception grant work statements require contact with the customer more routinely. The case manager prints a copy of the enrollment activities and grants then files them at the top to the last page section of the file for accessibility. This print out helps the individual case manager to track enrollments in multiple grants. A report can be obtained at any time which will contribute to additional assistance in tracking co-enrollments.

“Universal Customers” refers to the population of jobseekers who utilize AJCC services to assist with their self-directed job and vocational training searches, but who have not yet applied for WIOA funded services. These individuals may not ever enroll into WIOA-funded services as their self-directed efforts may result in job placement or enrollment or referral to a partner agency. Prior to moving to the CalJOBS system, MCWDB had a procedure to track all Universal Customers. After moving to CalJOBS, this functionality is no longer available. MCWDB currently tracks intake and case management through use of the State's CalJOBS system. The State of California has reserved this functionality within the CalJOBS system for the WIOA, Wagner-Peyser, and TAA programs, and does not allow Local Areas to utilize this functionality to track Universal Customer services. It is expected that the State in working closely with GSI, the CalJOBS developer, to determine how and whether all mandated partner programs under WIOA will utilize the CalJOBS system for tracking and reporting.

MCWDB acknowledges the importance of tracking and reporting walk-in, foot traffic to the AJCC system as these customers are receiving some benefits from the career center. MCWDB will select one of the following options to address this challenge and better track customers: 1) allow each AJCC to develop their own tracking and reporting systems then share this information with the other AJCCs; 2) develop and regulate a centrally-located document through which AJCC staff can track customer traffic and the types of services utilized; 3) expect a state-wide implementation of additional functionality into the CalJOBS system that will allow Local Areas to access reports summarizing utilization of their AJCC systems.

In May 2016, MCWDB switched to full utilization of CalJOBS for case management. MCWDB also has limited access to some of its partner's systems to track and verify enrollment. This access is on a limited basis, and generally used to determine eligibility.

L. Other Miscellaneous Information Requirements

i. Title II Program Applicant Access to the Local Plan

MCWDB will complete the following tasks to promote the availability of this plan to the public and Title II program applicants and partners:

- Prominently post the plan, and the request for public input, on the MCWDB's website;
- Place a public notice in the Local Newspaper notifying the public of the plan and directing them to the MCWDB's website;
- Distribute the link to the plan to all partners and stakeholders, with a request that it be forwarded to any and all interested parties;
- Distribute the link to the plan to all MCWDB members, with a request that it forwarded to any and all interested parties;
- Distribute the link to the plan to all Title II partners and Title II community based organizations or Title II agencies providing supportive services; and
- Make printed copies of the plan available upon request.

In accordance with WIOA Title II, the California AEFLA grant solicitation requires Local Boards to review all AEFLA applications submitted to the CDE from eligible providers within the Local Area to determine whether the applications are consistent with their Local Plans. Upon completing this review, the Local Board must submit a recommendation to the CDE to promote alignment with the Local Plan.

There are 14 considerations that Title II eligible providers must respond to in the AEFLA application. Local Boards are encouraged to review each eligible provider's entire application. However, the following considerations are most relevant to local plan alignment:

- Consideration 1 – Needs Assessment
- Consideration 4 – Alignment with One-stop Partners
- Consideration 8 – Facilitate Learning in Context
- Consideration 10 – Partnerships and Support Services for Development of Career Pathways
- Consideration 14 – Alignment with the Local Workforce Development Board Plan

Application Process for Local Boards

The CDE developed the following four-step process for the Local Board review of WIOA, Title II AEFLA applications:

1. Eligible providers will submit their AEFLA applications to the CDE through an online system.
2. The CDE will provide Local Area Administrators with password access to the online AEFLA applications for review of their alignment with local plans.
3. Local Area Administrators must complete and submit recommendations for promoting alignment with the local plan through the online system. The review and recommendation process begins on May 17, 2017, and ends on May 31, 2017.

4. The CDE will consider the results of the review by Local Boards in making awards.

The EDD and CDE believe this approach will assist in making the AEFLA application process fair, equitable, and efficient in terms of submitting an application, implementing Local Board review, and receiving recommendations from the Local Board concerning alignment with the approved local plan. More information on the review process will be provided as it becomes available.

After reviewing the plan, entities applying for Title II funding must follow these instructions:

1. Eligible providers are required to apply online and respond to considerations 1 – 13 (needs assessment, serving individuals with disabilities, past effectiveness, alignment with AJCC partners, intensity, duration, and flexible scheduling, evidence-based instructional practices and reading instruction, effective use of technology and distance learning, facilitate learning in context, qualified instructors and staff, partnerships and support services for development of career pathways, high quality information and data collection system, integrated English literacy and civics education, projected budget and budget narrative, alignment with local workforce development board plan). Along with the online submittal, providers must print and submit one hard copy with authorized original signatures.
2. Once the MCWDB plans have been approved, eligible providers must respond to consideration 14: Alignment with the Local Workforce Development Board Plan.
3. Authorized Original Signatures: The LEA Superintendent or the provider's Chief Executive Officer must sign and date the application. This certifies that all eligibility requirements set forth in this RFA, including the Assurances and Certifications, will be met. Public or private nonprofit organizations have an additional assurances form requiring signature.
5. For agencies that are not federal, state, or local governmental agencies, additional documentation needs to be included with the hard copy submission of the application:
 - In accordance with the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA), in order to receive funding, agencies that are not federal, state, or local governmental agencies are required to complete and submit the FFATA Sub-award Reporting Form with the application to the CDE. This form is accessible on the CDE Request for Applications Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, Title II [Web Page](#). Per 2 CFR Part 25.205, failure to submit may result in delayed grant distribution or cancellation of grant award.
 - If you are not a federal, state, or local governmental agency, and have not done business with the CDE, you must complete and submit with your application the State of California, Payee Data Record (Std. 204). This is available on the CDE Funding Forms [Web Page](#). Complete sections 2 through 6; information on sections 2, 4, and 6 must be consistent with the information identified in the application.

ii. Priority of Service

The MCWDB will ensure priority of services for veterans, their spouses, recipients of public assistance, other low-income individuals, and basic skills deficient individuals for career and training services by implementing an internal priority of service policy which mirrors the requirements under WIOA. In particular, the Merced County AJCC system seeks to ensure access and priority to veterans and eligible spouses and individuals (both adults and youth) with barriers to employment. Special attention is given to veterans, by issuing them unique identification cards which are flagged in MCWDB case files for priority. For individuals who express an interest in services, staff will assess their needs, document their barriers, and tailor services to support and remediate barriers. Services may include direct referral to partner agencies that have experience in the area identified. Professional development and training will be provided to staff to ensure, not only sensitivity to the needs of these unique populations, but cross-training of competencies in areas of client need. Enrollments will be tracked to monitor and ensure services are provided to those with barriers to employment.

MCDWB will continue to use the following order for determining the priority of service:

1. Veterans and eligible spouses who are recipients of public assistance, other low income individuals or individuals who are basic skills deficient.
2. Individuals who are the recipient of public assistance other than low income individuals or individuals who are basic skills deficient.
3. Veterans and eligible spouses who are not included in WIOA's priority of service.
4. Other individuals not included in WIOA's priority groups.

In addition, MCWDB will continue to follow all Federal and State guidance with regards to priority of service requirements under WIOA Section 134(c)(3)(E).

iii. Portions of the Local Plan in the Regional Plan Narrative

Multiple sections of the MCWDB local plan are being exclusively handled in the narrative content of the regional plan or are reflected in both plans. These sections are as follows:

- *Regional Economic and Background Analysis*, including an economic analysis, skill needs analysis, regional labor force analysis, workforce activities analysis, and the method used to assess industry workforce needs. This is being handled exclusively in the regional plan.
- *Information on regional sector pathways*, including the method using to determine the alignment of education and training to regional needs, existing career pathways, and existing efforts to further develop career pathways.
- *Information on industry-valued post-secondary credential attainment*, including a method to determine recognized credentials, a method to ensure credentials' future relevance, a method to determine the value of credentials, training providers, and goals and local contributions for credentials.
- *Information on accessibility and inclusivity*, including the involvement of stakeholders representing target populations, participation of Adult Basic Education Consortia, basic skills needs, the integration of basic skills in pathway programs, the streamlining of intake of basic skills needs, ensuring accessibility for individuals with disabilities in pathway programs, involving TANF participants in pathway programs, the delivery of supportive services with pathway programs, the role of CBOs in pathway programs, and a method to retain participants.

The regional plan also provides the following additional content:

- Regional Partners who are party to the plan
- Job Quality Considerations
- Regional Assessment
- Additional Federal Requirements
- Regional Memorandum of Understanding(s) or Cooperative Service Agreements
- Community College and AEBG Related Attachments